

## STUDENT Example

**transatlanticism**

**Out and about in Ferndale**

Ferndale, Michigan is a lovely community that is located in between Detroit and Royal Oak. This city craves a very active and diverse community, being both family oriented as well as offering a vibrant night life to those that seek it.

In Ferndale small businesses are booming, with many trendy little bars, restaurants and indie record shops. It's an alternative little town - both new shops and street offers something new and different. Residential blocks are filled with quaint houses and beautifully kept neighborhood parks. The Rainbow colored flags will also catch your eye at almost every turn.

For some time now Ferndale has been known for being one of, if not the most friendly city in Metro Detroit (or Michigan as a whole) for the gay and lesbian community.

Ferndale is a welcoming and friendly place for anyone, but more than this, it offers acceptance, support and a feeling of belonging for the gay and lesbian community.

Stephanie  
Ferndale, Michigan, United States  
View my complete profile

Labels  
My photo essay, so far...  
Previous Post...  
Photo Essay Update  
As the Sun Sets We Rise  
Photo 13 (3/20/06)  
Photo Essay  
Seven  
Seven Mile...  
races!

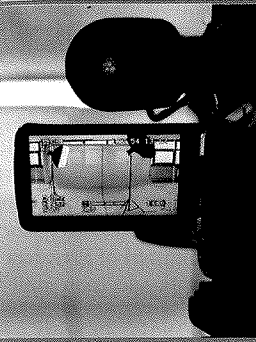
Blogger

Student photo essay  
[stephaniajune.blogspot.com/2005/11/out-and-about-in-ferndale.html](http://stephaniajune.blogspot.com/2005/11/out-and-about-in-ferndale.html)



The student who composed this photo essay documents how the community of Ferndale, Michigan shows support for the gay and lesbian community across its many businesses.

## Digital Video



In 2005, Jawed Karim posted a video of himself at the San Diego Zoo, creatively titled, “Me at the zoo” (Figure 9.1). Although the video only lasts 18 seconds, this was the beginning of YouTube, started by Karim, Chad Hurley, and Steve Chen. Their purpose was to create a video-sharing site that allowed anyone to post videos of everyday events and to make the site searchable, so videos could be found easily. Today, YouTube stores not just the mundane videos, but also the extraordinary moments, as well as corporate videos from companies, organizations, and celebrities. Digital video has become a major online medium.

Although digital video existed before YouTube, this was the first site that made it easy to share videos with other people. Previously, video files were comparatively large in size and, therefore, difficult to quickly send through the Internet. Now, due in part to YouTube and new video compression technologies, a researcher in Antarctica can share daily video with her university lab in Minnesota in a matter of minutes.

Digital video technologies have also become more affordable, portable, and easy to use. In fact, almost everyone can take video through their smart phone. Because of the ease of use and distribution, the world is sharing events that would have taken days to spread by other means, and without the filter of government agencies or corporate interests who could have stopped viewers from seeing what they didn't want seen.

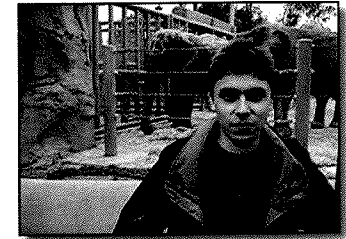


Figure 9.1  
 “Me at the zoo” was the first video posted to YouTube. Yes, Jawed. Elephant trunks are cool.  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNQXAC9IVRw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNQXAC9IVRw)



For instance, since 2006, you might have viewed light-hearted videos, such as “Charlie bit my finger,” fundraising campaigns, such as the Ice Bucket Challenge, or have been introduced to Justin Bieber, whose career was launched partially due to digital video. But you might have also seen more important events, such as video direct from US soldiers fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, video from the 2011 Japan earthquake and tsunami, or the death of Nedā Āghā-Soltān, an aspiring Iranian musician whose violent death by gunshot was captured by an amateur digital videographer and uploaded that night. *Time* magazine has called her shooting, “The most widely witnessed death in human history.” In comparison, consider that the famous homemade film reel of President John F. Kennedy’s assassination didn’t broadcast on network television until 1975, twelve years after the event took place.

## Digital Video

Since digital video is another writing technology you might use to communicate, it’s important you understand how to shoot and post videos, so you can tap into this powerful writing technology for your own purposes. However, this task is not just technical, but also rhetorical and aesthetic. Whether you have a smartphone that can record video or a more expensive digital video camcorder, the basics of camera angles and shot selection are relatively similar to shooting analog film.

This chapter won’t cover all the technical basics of your individual video recording device (see your device’s user manual for this information). However, it will discuss some basics for how to shoot video more conscientiously.

As you read about the various ways to script, compose, and shoot digital video, consider how these elements can be used rhetorically. For instance, how does a particular camera angle affect the audience? What kind and how many writers are required to create a script? How does the medium of video encourage particular design and genre choices, and vice versa? Keep these questions in mind as you read through the chapter.

### Types of digital video

There are many types of digital videos you can produce and a variety of ways you can distribute them—from YouTube and Vimeo, sites that permit longer videos up to full-length feature films, to Vine, a video-sharing service that allows you to create short, six-second videos. Although the following list is not exhaustive, it covers some of the more popular kinds of digital videos that can serve a variety of purposes.

- **Vlog:** As discussed in Chapter 7, “vlog” stands for “video blog,” a blog that is distributed via digital video. Vlogs are usually short videos of two to five minutes that focus on the topic of the site or channel in which they’re located. Vlogs may be scripted or spontaneous, although recording will most likely be smoother if you at least have a rough outline of what you plan to talk about.
- **Interview:** An interview is simply a discussion between a host and a single respondent or larger group. Interview questions should be planned in advance, although you might come up with others as the interview progresses. Specific camera angles for interview videos are discussed later in the chapter.
- **Tutorial:** A video-based tutorial instructs the viewer how to accomplish some task. These videos should be well scripted, and shots should include you actually completing the tasks as you describe them to the viewer.
- **Review:** A review provides an evaluation of some product or service for the viewer. When possible, include shots of you using the product or service, as well as its best and worst features.
- **Essay or presentation:** A video essay provides a way to make an argument, just as you would in a traditional essay. However, a video essay allows you to incorporate images and sound to help make your point.
 

Video presentations can simply be Powerpoint or Prezi presentations that are recorded, either with you giving the presentation live, or screencapturing the presentation and then adding voice-over narration. Video presentations allow you to deliver your presentation to a larger audience.
- **Résumé:** A video résumé transforms a print résumé into a dynamic showcase of your skills and abilities. A video résumé is not simply a reading of your print résumé, but uses the power of digital video to tell a story about what you can do for an employer.
- **Documentary:** A documentary is a video that investigates some question or problem. The video might make an argument, but its primary goal is to show the audience some slice or perspective of the world they might not have seen before. Although traditionally composed of celluloid film, digital video has allowed anyone with a camera to make his or her own documentary.

- **Feature film:** Although also traditionally composed of celluloid film, most feature films you see in the theater are composed either with digital video cameras, or are heavily edited with digital video tools in postproduction. Although you probably don't have access to actors, producers, special effects editors, and the entire crew that helps make a large-scale feature film, you can still make use of digital video to create your own narratives.

## Digital Video Rhetorics

Although video shares many of the same rhetorical elements you've looked at in this book, you should also understand rhetorical techniques specific to the medium of video. How you position and capture video is as important as what you capture, and the methods below will help your audience better interpret your intended message. In addition, many of these techniques can apply to shooting digital still images.

### Zooming and framing

When composing a video, you often use the viewfinder to make sure your desired subject is in the shot. The two techniques to ensure the subject appears correctly include zooming in or out to appropriately place the subject, and framing the subject within the viewfinder.

When shooting a particular subject, usually a person, there are generally four shot types that are created by the camera's zoom (or by physically moving the camera nearer or farther from the subject): wide shot, medium shot, close-up, and extreme close-up.

- **Wide shot:** This shot zooms the camera lens as wide as possible, showing the subject surrounded by the context of his environment. Use this shot to show the relationship between a subject and his surroundings (Figure 9.2).
- **Medium Shot:** This shot zooms in a bit, but still shows some context around the subject of the shot (Figure 9.3).
- **Close-up:** For this shot, the camera lens is zoomed in farther, usually showing a subject's head and shoulders (Figure 9.4).
- **Extreme close-up:** This shot is the opposite of the wide shot. In general, little background is shown, and the camera is zoomed in on the subject's face, or even only part of the face (Figure 9.5).



Figure 9.2  
This example shows a wide shot of the subject.

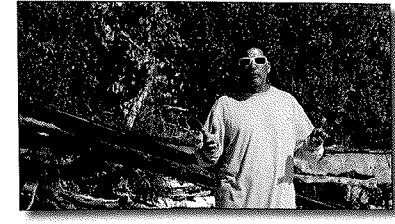


Figure 9.3  
This medium shot zooms in on the subject, but still provides background context.

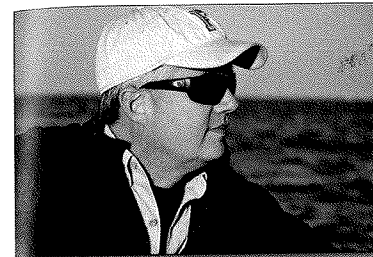


Figure 9.4  
Close-up shots usually focus on the subject's face.



Figure 9.5  
An extreme close-up provides even more focus and detail on a subject.

Of course, the subject doesn't have to be a person, and the interesting part of the person may not be her face; it may be a tattoo, item of clothing, or some other feature. What you choose to focus on tells the audience what you want them to think is important, just as you might boldface or italicize a word you want to be stressed in a written document.

When placing a person or object in a shot, you also should be aware of how that person or object fits within the frame of the camera lens. For instance, you don't want an important part to be out of frame, nor do you want irrelevant scenery, props, or equipment to appear in the frame. Generally, consider headroom, chin room, and nose room when filming a person.

- **Headroom:** This term refers to the amount of space between the top of the subject's head and the top of the frame (Figure 9.6). Usually, unless it's an extreme close-up, you don't want to "cut off" part of your subject's head.
- **Chin room:** Just as you don't want to cut off the top of your subject's head, you also shouldn't cut off her or his chin (Figure 9.7).



Figure 9.6  
These images show bad use of headroom (left) and good use of headroom (right).

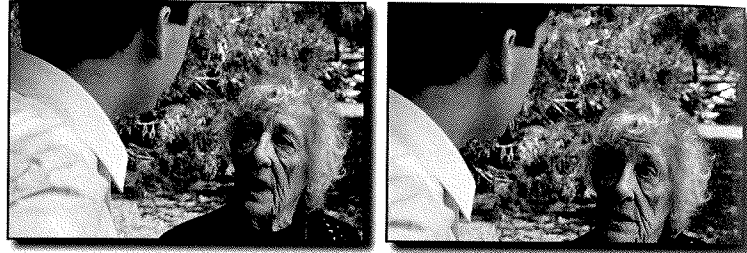


Figure 9.7  
The left image provides plenty of chin room for the subject, while the right image nearly cuts off the chin.

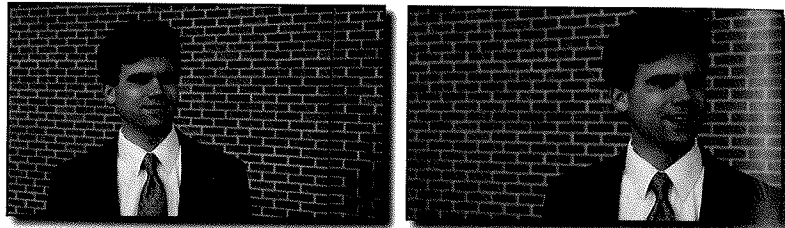


Figure 9.8  
The left image provides adequate space into which the subject can look, speak, and act, while the right image provides no space.

- **Nose room:** This term refers to the amount of space between the subject and the area to which he or she is looking or speaking (Figure 9.8). If you were to place the frame opposite the subject's face too close to his mouth, then it would appear as if he was talking into a wall.

Link

## Building

With a still or video camera, practice composing each of the shot types and framing techniques discussed above. How can different ways of composing enact the rhetorical appeals of *logos*, *ethos*, *pathos*, and *kairos*? Develop a claim based on your research, support it with reasons and evidence, and then share your images with the class.

Search

## Engine

Find examples in which a head, chin, or nose is "cut" from the subject. Do you think this cutting was intentional or accidental? Does the cutting detract from watching the subject? Do such cuts detract from the videographer's *ethos*? Develop a claim based on your research, and support it with reasons and evidence.

## Camera angles

Most of the shots discussed above consider subjects that are mostly level with the camera. However, you can also vary the camera angle to create different relationships between the subject and the audience, thus creating rhetorical effects mostly through power relationships.



Figure 9.9  
A low angle shot places the subject in a superior position to the audience.

- **Low angle:** If you place the camera below the subject's height, you confer a status of superiority to the subject because it now looks down upon the viewer (Figure 9.9). This angle also might be chosen to show an aerial background behind the subject.

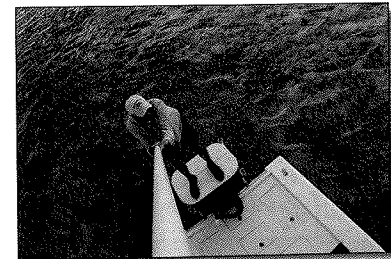


Figure 9.10  
The high angle connotes a sense of superiority over the subject.

- **High angle:** As an alternative to the low angle shot, the high angle confers the audience's superiority over the subject (Figure 9.10). If the audience

is seeing through the point of view of another character, then it would associate a position of power through this character's eyes, as he or she is looking down upon the other character. High angle shots also can be used to provide unique perspectives and show more background information, such as an aerial flyover.

- **Dutch angle:** This angle tilts the camera, so the scene is shot at a sideways angle, providing a dynamic and disorientating view to the audience (Figure 9.11).



Figure 9.11  
The Dutch angle fills the camera to provide a canted view.

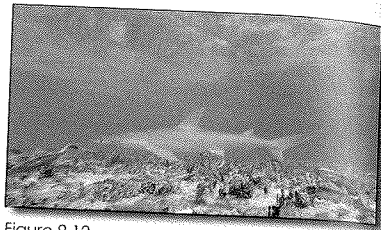


Figure 9.12  
This swimming shark provides a vector of direction.

These angles also help you create lines and vectors within your shots (Figure 9.12). If you've had a basic design class, you've learned that vertical lines create a sense of strength, horizontal lines a sense of stability, and angled lines a sense of movement or uneasiness. Lines perform the same functions when they appear in video as well. For instance, an image of a tall building shot from a low angle can symbolize strength and power. The panning of a calm ocean can suggest serenity. Diagonal lines, perhaps produced by a Dutch angle, can create dynamic shots.

## Building

In addition to the three angles mentioned above, research other camera angles that have been invented. What was the original use for these camera perspectives? What problems did they solve? How are they used today? Develop a claim based on your research, and support it with reasons and evidence.

## Engine

With a camera, photograph or video an object from multiple camera angles. How does the viewer's relation to the object change with each change in angle? Which do you find the most pleasing? Which do you find the strangest? Do different angles reveal some details that others don't? Develop a claim based on your research, and support it with reasons and evidence.

## Rule of thirds

Typically, you might think if you want to emphasize a subject, you should place it in the middle of your viewing frame when shooting video. However, asymmetrical designs are often more engaging and dynamic to viewers. When working with space in your frame, one technique you might consider is the "rule of thirds." This rule divides the image in your viewfinder into nine segments by virtually dividing the image with two horizontal rules and two vertical rules (see Figure 9.13). Any major compositional elements should lie somewhere near one of the four intersections of these lines. For instance, rather than aligning your main object in the center of the frame, you would align it on one of the four vertices, which gives your shot a more dynamic feeling or greater sense of depth and context.

Credit: Chaky

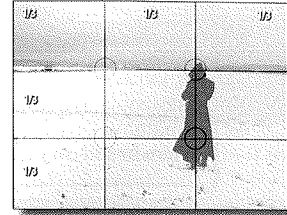


Figure 9.13  
The focal point of this image is emphasized through the rule of thirds.

The rule of thirds in some ways is a shortcut to creating designs with an aesthetic use of spatial arrangements. A more precise layout follows the "Golden Mean," displayed by the Fibonacci spiral (Figure 9.14). When overlaid on several photographs, notice how the major area of focus aligns with the spiral. Another shortcut to this Golden Mean, then, is to divide the composition into fifths rather than thirds and align your major point of interest along the two-fifths or three-fifths lines in any direction (portrait or landscape). However, the rule of thirds will generally produce good results, and many video cameras have a feature that simulates gridlines in your viewfinder, allowing you to align your subject with one of the four intersection points.

Credit: Raiana Tomazini

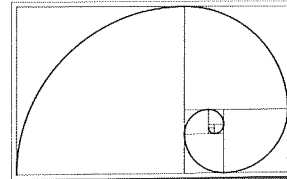


Figure 9.14  
Fibonacci spiral

You can usually notice the rule of thirds while watching television, specifically during interview scenes. For example, this still from *The Office* in Figure 9.15 uses the rule of thirds to position the interviewee's head in the upper right intersection point. If filming your own interviews, you should make use of these upper two points, positioning your subject's face in either of these two spots.

Credit: NBCUniversal



Figure 9.15  
Many interviews use the rule of thirds to arrange their shots.

### Building

Link

As discussed above, television shows, such as *The Office*, use the rule of thirds during their "interview" sequences. Locate other instances of television or films that use this technique, either fictional shows or news programs. Do you find these uses of the rule of thirds effective? Develop a claim based on your research, and support it with reasons and evidence.

### Engine

Search

Using a camera—either provided by your class or just a cell phone camera—practice taking photos of a variety of objects using the rule of thirds. However, also take a series of photos placing objects in other orientations. In a photo editor, overlay a rule-of-thirds grid onto the images, seeing how well your images align with this principle. Share your images with the class, and discuss which photos are more engaging and whether the rule of thirds improves the composition of your images. How does the rule of thirds enact any of the rhetorical appeals of *logos*, *ethos*, *kairos*, or *pathos*?

## Using multiple cameras

Multiple cameras, or multiple camera positions, can make your video more dynamic, offer varying perspectives, and provide more information for the viewer. Two techniques to ensure the best result include the 180-degree rule and creating sequences out of multiple shots.

If you were shooting a scene between two people, such as an interview scene, you might place cameras in two positions, one aimed at the interviewer, and one at the interviewee. When setting up a shot such as this, always keep the

cameras on the same side of the subjects. In other words, imagine a line separates the cameras from the subjects, a line that can never be crossed (Figure 9.16). This is called the 180-degree rule. If you were shooting the interviewer from one side so she appeared on the left of the frame, but moved the camera across this line and shot the interviewee from the same position, the audience would become confused since it would appear that neither was talking to the other (Figure 9.17). In terms of *logos*, breaking this rule would seem illogical to the audience.

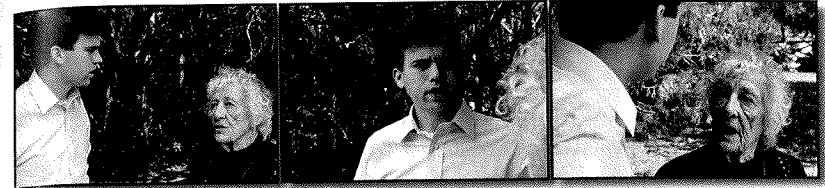


Figure 9.16  
When filming two people interacting with each other, keep the cameras on the same side of an imaginary line.



Figure 9.17  
While the top sequence makes sense to us as two people talking to each other, the bottom sequence does not.

Besides alternating camera positions between two subjects, you also can alter camera positions on a single subject. For instance, if you were filming an instructional sequence on how to tie a fishing knot, you could shoot the entire action from one fixed position called a static shot. However, audiences often prefer dynamic shots, shots that move or cut to close-ups for more interesting perspectives. Instead of just one perspective, consider the shot from several perspectives, providing more interest to the viewers and giving them more information through different angles (Figure 9.18).

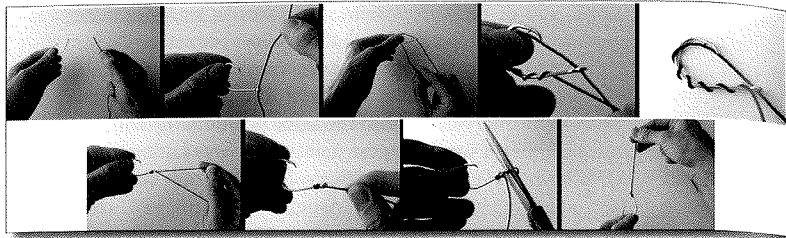


Figure 9.18  
The action of tying a knot becomes much more interesting once a dynamic sequence is created.

When composing a sequence, have the subject perform the complete action for each angle so you have plenty of options when editing. For the example above, the subject should tie the knot four different times with the entire action being captured from each angle.

**Link Building**

Think of a mundane task you perform regularly, such as making a sandwich, turning on your computer, or getting on a bike. Create a sequence that would break the action into at least six different shots, and create rough sketches for each shot. Why did you choose to focus on some elements over others? What do you hope the audience's reaction would be? How would the scene change if you replaced some shots with others? Which rhetorical appeals do you think are most important in this sequence? Share your sequence with the class, and discuss these choices.

**Search Engine**

Watch your favorite television show, and pay attention to how the director composes a sequence out of a single event, such as getting into a car and driving, to more complicated action sequences. Describe each shot and what information it provides that wouldn't be available from just a single, static camera position. Develop a claim based on your research, and support it with reasons and evidence.

**Montage**

If you've ever seen *Team America: World Police* by *South Park* creators, Matt Stone and Trey Parker, you might remember these lyrics. They offer

commentary about the filmmaking process of montage, a technique used to reduce a longer period of narrative time down to a few minutes, so a movie doesn't have to last many months to tell a whole story. As an example, watch the *Team America* montage clip in Figure 9.19.

Credit: Paramount/Courtesy Everett Collection



Figure 9.19  
*Team America* shows how to make a montage.  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=ojc0PxeikfA&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ojc0PxeikfA&feature=youtu.be)



This montage occurs at a point in the film when the movie's main character, Gary Johnston, needs to gain physical fitness and skill after becoming depressed and despondent from an earlier failure. As the lyrics explain, a montage shows "a passage of time" with "a lot of things happening at once" in only a few minutes (or even seconds), for "to show it all would take too long."

Using this logic, the montage depicts Johnston target shooting, running on a treadmill, practicing martial arts, shaving, flying in a simulator, strength training, reading, as well as a few clips of other characters to maintain the context of why he's preparing. Obviously, even though Johnston's training only takes "one day," all of these actions would be too long to show in a full-length film.

While a montage is actually composed when editing, you need to consider all the shots you need to take that will go into the montage. Therefore, create a plan to include and record the scenes for a montage before you get to the editing phase.

**Search Engine**

Using a video camera—either a camcorder or a video camera on your phone—take brief video clips from each part of your day and try to create a montage depicting the whole day in two minutes or less. Share your montage with the class, and revise your montage based on their feedback.

Link

## Building

Watch the montage scene from *Rocky IV* (Figure 9.20), in which Rocky prepares in the Russian countryside to fight his main opponent, Drago. As you watch, write down the answers to the following questions: What are all the activities you notice in the montage? How long do you think it would take all of these activities in real time? How does the montage order and link the scenes together to create a narrative arc? How does this particular montage use comparison and contrast to create a narrative? Develop a claim based on your research, and support it with reasons and evidence.

Credit: MGM/United Artists



Figure 9.20  
The Rocky movies make frequent use of montage scenes.  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=rV7tjT\\_dGbY&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rV7tjT_dGbY&feature=youtu.be)



## Digital Video Writing

This section covers the kinds of writing that are necessary to produce digital video, writing that may range from a traditional research report to help you produce other documents, a script for a video, a list of shooting locations, or something as simple as a timeline to keep you on track so you can successfully produce the final visual output (Figure 9.21). Writing in words has always been an important tool for writing in images, and this chapter will cover the ways traditional writing can transfer to digital outputs that may not even contain words.

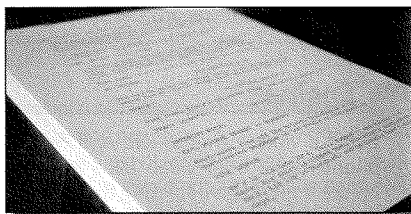


Figure 9.21  
Although this is one kind of "script," you'll write many other kinds when creating visual texts.

## Screenplays

When you think of writing for film or video, the script or screenplay probably first comes to mind. The screenplay provides the plan for the movie, the detailed outline for how to produce the visual and audio elements of the film. When a writer composes a screenplay, she is obviously writing words, but words meant to be transformed into images. These words need to be clear and easily adaptable to a visual camera shot or an action by an actor. When writing a script, one writes the visual elements, what the audience will see. Although you probably won't produce a screenplay for a full-length movie in your class, understanding the function and terminology of screenplays and how to write them can help you produce better digital texts, whether they're for a photo essay or a short YouTube clip.

The screenwriter also composes what the audience hears, such as the dialogue or sound effects (the film's musical soundtrack is usually composed by a professional musician). However, as discussed in Figure 9.22, a film's dialogue—which many will probably assume is the most important writing in the screenplay—can be the least important part.

As Lawrence Kasdan notes in the video, "The biggest misconception about screenwriting is that the screenwriter writes the dialogue and someone comes up with the other stuff" (Figure 9.22). So what is this "other stuff?" Dick Clement states that a screenplay includes the "architecture" or structure of the story. This structure typically follows some sort of narrative arc, with a beginning, middle, and end. Figure 9.23 shows Freytag's Pyramid, a diagram that helps explain the basic structure of narratives.

Credit: Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences



Figure 9.22  
There are some misconceptions about being a screenwriter.  
[www.oscars.org/video/watch/screenwriters\\_misconception.html](http://www.oscars.org/video/watch/screenwriters_misconception.html)

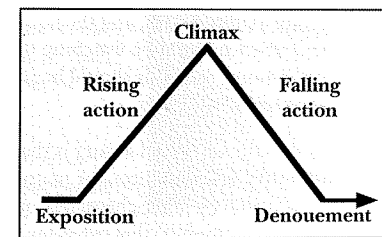


Figure 9.23  
Freytag's Pyramid diagrams the structure of a film's story.



## Rhetorical Continuities

Aristotle, in describing ancient Greek drama, identified three main parts to a well-written play: a beginning, middle, and end. Gustav Freytag, a German playwright and novelist, designed a five-part pyramid with which he explains typical dramatic structure. Freytag's pyramid derives from a five-act play, in which the following parts appear: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and dénouement. While Freytag based his pyramid on plays, this analytical device also can be used to understand other kinds of narratives, including fiction, film, and television.

The beginning of a story offers critical information, introductions to the main characters, and familiarity with the setting. In addition, the beginning presents the audience with a “hook”—some situation that captures their attention and interest. You can think of a hook as the exigency of the film. What is the problem facing the characters? What question is the director trying to explore? In other words, why is this story being told, and why is the audience compelled to watch it?

When considering that a typical screenplay is about 120 pages (with one page equivalent to one minute of screen time), this hook should occur in the first 10 pages of the script (or the first 10 minutes of a movie). Of course, many of the videos produced on a daily basis aren't two hours long, so you should consider getting to the hook sooner. If the video is informative rather than narrative (for example, an instructional video rather than a story), then this beginning should introduce the reader to those providing the information, what organizations they're affiliated with, and the hook, which can be thought of as the reason why the audience might be watching the video. If the video is a review of the latest smartphone, then this should be stated early to let the audience know what and why they're watching.

The middle section of a story is the longest and provides the rising action of the narrative. In this section, the main character attempts to solve a problem, but is complicated by other characters or situations. These characters have their own problems (subplots) that can get in the way of the main character's motivation or sometimes correspond with it. Often, alliances are formed between characters with similar interests.

You can see this typical structure played out in the movie, *The Hangover*. The hook, the problem the characters confront, comes when Phil (Bradley Cooper), Stu (Ed Helms), and Alan (Zach Galifianakis) can't remember where they left

their friend, Doug (Justin Bartha), who is soon to be married. Besides their hangover-induced amnesia, other problems complicate the search for their friend, such as awakening to find their hotel room in shambles as well as finding a baby and a live tiger (Figure 9.24).

They further discover that they've stolen a police car (for which they're arrested), Stu has married a stripper, they have stolen \$80,000 from a flamboyant gangster, and the tiger belongs to former boxer Mike Tyson. The main plot of the movie develops as the characters figure out how all of these complications occurred and trace them through the previous night to find Doug. Although the movie is a bit exaggerated in terms of its probability, it provides a useful example of how to include obstacles and subplots in the story that still drive the main plot.

Following the rising action, the story ends with a climax, the highest point of the rising action. The climax marks a point of transition for the protagonist. This final act provides the key moment at which the plot will turn toward its fulfillment.

However, the climax itself is not the end of the story. After this final buildup, a falling action occurs in which the actual conclusion is revealed. Often, the ending is still contingent, still in doubt, and could go in either direction. The hero could win, or lose. Phil, Stu, and Alan might find Doug in time for his wedding, or they might not.

The actual conclusion, also called the dénouement, presents the outcome of the climax, and allows all of the unresolved situations in the film to become solved or untied (Figure 9.25). The dénouement may come quickly before the final scene of the film (such as Brody's killing of the shark right before he and Hooper swim back to shore in *Jaws*), or a more lengthy conclusion, as in *The Hangover*, in which the final wedding scene depicts Stu breaking up with his controlling girlfriend and the friends finding



Figure 9.24  
*The Hangover* introduces many complications for the protagonists to overcome.

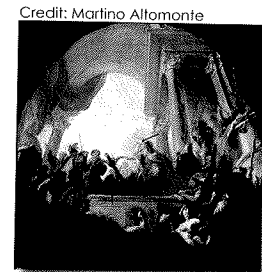


Figure 9.25  
Dénouement literally means to “unknot,” and describes the resolution to the story. In this painting, Alexander the Great cuts the Gordian knot, creating a dénouement or final solution to his problem of untying it.

a camera with images of their forgotten exploits. Although the plot resolves when they find Doug and get him to the wedding, the falling action continues for several minutes before the final scene occurs.

In addition to dialogue and the basic structure, Brian Helgeland explains that screenwriters have to write all of the smaller details as well, including the exterior shots, such as bridge explosions, car chases, fight sequences, and other action. In John August's words:

*Dialogue is a hugely important part of movies, but it's really one of the smaller parts of movies. The screenwriter's the person who figures out what's gonna happen, and when it's gonna happen, and how it's gonna happen... the screenwriter creates a plan for making the whole movie.*

While a screenwriter won't create all the writing that goes into a film on his own, he does create the blueprint from which much of the other writing develops. As discussed in Chapter 6, most of the research that goes into movies derives from what the cast and crew read in the script.



## DIGITAL Connections

EXT. BEL AIR BAY CLUB --  
PACIFIC PALISADES, CA --  
MORNING

It's a beautiful spring morning in the Palisades. High atop the cliffs, looking out over the Pacific Ocean, sits the exclusive BEL AIR BAY CLUB. Workers bustle about the lawn, setting up a high-end wedding.

A STRING QUARTET warms up. A team of FLORISTS arrange centerpieces. CATERERS set the white linen tables...

INT. BRIDAL SUITE -- DAY

A simple, classic wedding dress hangs on a closet door in this sun-drenched bridal suite. Sitting at the makeup table, surrounded by her bridesmaids, is the beautiful bride, TRACY TURNER, 20's. She's busy doing her makeup.

Just then, Tracy's rich, stern FATHER, 50's, blows in.  
MR. TURNER

Any word from Doug?

As an example of a screenplay, consider this early script segment from *The Hangover*.

The way he spits out "Doug" tells us all we need to know about how Mr. Turner feels about his future son-in-law.

TRACY

No, but I'm sure he's--

Just then, Tracy's CELLPHONE rings. She quickly answers it.

TRACY (CONT'D)

Hello?

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. MOJAVE DESERT -- MORNING

Heat-waves rise off the Mojave. Standing at a lone, dust covered pay phone in the middle of the desert is

VICK LENNON

He's in his late 20's, tall, rugged-and currently a mess. His shirt is ripped open, his aviator sunglasses are bent, his lip is bloodied, and he clearly hasn't slept in days.

VICK

Tracy, it's Vick.

Parked on the dirt road behind Vick is his near-totalled 1967 Cadillac Deville convertible; it's scratched, dented, filthy -- and missing its passenger side door.

Slouched inside are TWO OTHER GUYS, also looking like hell.

TRACY

Hey Vick!

VICK

Listen, honey...The bachelor party got a little out of control and, well...we lost

Doug.

TRACY

(her jaw dropping)

What?! But we're getting married in like four hours!

These first few pages of the script provide brief descriptions of the characters for the actors who play them, the costume designers who dress them, and the make-up artists who need to add effects, such as a bloody lip, not to mention set designers and whoever must procure the 1967 Cadillac Deville convertible.

However, these first pages of the script clearly provide something even more important: the hook. Very quickly, the audience understands the problem: there is a wedding planned to take place in four hours and Doug, the groom, is missing. The rest of the film shows the previous 40 hours and how the situation unfolded, and makes the audience wonder if Doug will actually get to his wedding.

Vick squints at the rising sun.

VICK

Yeah, that's not gonna happen.

CUT TO:

TITLE OVER BLACK: 40 HOURS EARLIER

CUT TO:

EXT. THE 10 FREEWAY -- DAY

The top down, The Who's "Baba O'Riley" blasting from the stereo, Vick's pristine Cadillac convertible rockets down Highway 10 towards Nevada.

At the wheel is Vick, looking as sharp as his Caddy in a half open shirt and mint condition aviators.

Sitting shotgun is the groom, DOUG BILLINGS, late 20's, handsome, barefoot, crunchy-an all around great guy.

Behind Vick sits ALAN MERVISH, late 20's, an anal tax attorney from Connecticut, his Izod shirt tucked into his khakis. He's currently applying sun screen to his forehead.

Next to Alan is STU PRYCE, late 20's, former high school linebacker and lovably dimwitted father of two. He drums the back of the front seat to the music, totally pumped, like this is his first time out of the house in years. Because it is.

When writing your own scripts, you don't need to include all of the elements of a Hollywood screenplay, but they provide important information to different audiences about different facets of a project's production. Most importantly, your script should provide the narrative of your visual text. However, other instructions help to inform those working with you (or even remind yourself) how certain scenes should be composed. Together, the narrative outline and technical instructions provide a blueprint for completing your project.

## Building

Choose a short story, comic, or other story not already in movie or film form. Write a screenplay of this story as a film. How would you provide details about interior or exterior shots? How would you provide character descriptions? What would you want others to know who might be working on its production? What parts would you remove from the original story, and what parts would you add? Develop a claim based on your responses, and support it with reasons and evidence.

Link

## Engine

Write down your favorite five or ten movies. If you can, revisit the first 10 to 20 minutes of each movie, and note when the hook occurs. What aspects of the hook make it compelling to keep watching the film? Why is it interesting? Do you feel it occurs too late, too early, or at an appropriate time? Answer these questions about each movie, and develop a claim based on your responses. Support the claim with reasons and evidence.

Search

## Dialogue

According to the screenwriters in Figure 9.22, dialogue isn't the most important part of writing for a film. However, it represents what the audience hears and still plays a major role. When writing dialogue for your own project, there are several guidelines you can follow to make it sound more authentic and believable.

### Read

Find a variety of scripts that contain different kinds of dialogue, and read them. Note how the dialogue is written to mimic spoken language and what cues the screenwriter provides to the actors for guidance. The more scripts you read, the more familiar you'll become with how to write good dialogue. You can also use plays in addition to scripts.

### Speak

In addition to reading the dialogue in the screenplays you find, try speaking the dialogue out loud. This will give you a sense of how the written word translates into a spoken performance. You might also watch clips of film as you follow along in the screenplay to hear how the lines of dialogue are delivered by actors.

### Cause and effect

Typically, dialogue should follow a natural flow from one line to another, in which the response spoken by a character makes sense based on the line that came before. In other words, dialogue should feed off itself. If a character's line states, "Why did you burn the house down?" the following line might be something like, "It's the only way I could stop the infestation of the alien virus," not "I need to get some bread." The lines should be logically connected.

### Motivate the dialogue

When characters speak, it's typically because they want something from another character. Dialogue should be motivated by these desires of the character. What

is the character trying to accomplish in the scene, and how does speaking help her or him to do this? When writing narration for video that is expository, what is your motivation for the narration? What are you trying to point out with words that isn't evident in the images? How does narration help you make your point to the audience?

### Don't infodump

Often in science fiction books and films, at some point the author has to explain the new world she is introducing or explain how some piece of technology works. This technique is called an “infodump” because the author is dumping a lot of information through dialogue that is often forced, clunky, and unnatural. Of course, this can also occur with places or situations you are familiar with, where the director might find it necessary to bring the reader up to speed on some aspect of the story. However, instead of including this information through dialogue, try to use actions, props, or other visual elements to convey the information rather than dialogue that doesn't ring true. Let the audience pick up on the visual cues and subtext of the film. Show them, don't tell them.

### Perform

Once you've written your own dialogue, speak it, and have others speak it as well. As with any writing that provides instructions, you should user-test your material to make sure it does what you want. You should perform your writing even if that writing is voice-over narration.

### Revise

Consider bringing in a third party to listen to your dialogue, asking him or her to make notes about your performance for you to review. After you've performed your dialogue, revise those areas that sound forced or unnatural. Perform the new lines, and revise again as needed.

These are just a few tips to help you craft dialogue in your projects. They apply to both fictional narratives as well as nonfiction, expository works. Study carefully how other writers craft scripts, not just those for the traditional Hollywood film, but also for television, documentaries, nature shows, or other kinds of programs. Finally, consider looking at genre-specific scripts, such as horror, suspense, mystery, romance, or science fiction, if you have narrowed your interests to a precise genre.

## Building

Craft a short scene between two characters that primarily features dialogue. Follow the guidelines above, making sure the dialogue helps the characters to achieve some goal and that dialogue from one character feeds into the following line of the other character. When you've completed the script, perform it before the class, and get their feedback on the quality of your dialogue.

## Engine

Because of each panel's limited space, comic books require sparse use of dialogue, relying on dialogue that is tightly crafted and highly motivated. Bring in a comic book or graphic novel and study the dialogue. Compare this dialogue to what you might find in a film, play, or novel. Do you notice any differences? Similarities? Does the dialogue serve other functions that it doesn't in other genres? Develop a claim based on your findings, and support it with reasons and evidence.

Link

Search

## Narration

Unlike dialogue, voice-over narration isn't meant to sound like “natural” speech, so your goals for producing this kind of writing are very different. Rather than just telling a fictional story, narration might be used to try to sell something (advertising), inform (public service announcement), explain (nature documentary), or persuade (social or political documentary). Just like any piece of writing, you should understand your purpose for the narration as well as your audience.

- Are you writing to a general audience in which you should choose basic diction, so people from a wide range of educational backgrounds can understand it?
- Are you writing for children, so that you must discuss complex concepts in simple ways?
- Are you writing narration for other specialists, who might expect disciplinary language?

Each of these audiences come with its own constraints and expectations and will determine how you should script your narration. However, narration should sound more like natural speech than the essays you compose in other writing classes.

While timing is important when delivering dialogue, it's extremely important when crafting narration. Not only do you have a limited amount of time into which you must fit all you'd like to say, but you also must decide when to include narration. You must decide when visuals might need some sort of narration to enhance the viewer's understanding and when it might be better to include silence, letting the power of the image speak for itself, allowing the audience's imagination to work without other input. Remember that images can evoke powerful emotional responses in your audience. You will most likely find that using images to elicit emotional reactions will be more effective than using narration to tell the audience what to feel in a particular scene.

Narration shouldn't be used to tell the story but rather to comment on the visual aspects of the story. Action should be shown, not told about. However, some narration can be used to comment on the action of the scene that might be unclear to viewers. This technique is common in nature documentaries, in which the camera may show some activity performed by an animal, with the narrator explaining exactly what the animal is doing (building a nest, courting a mate, or ambushing prey) (Figure 9.26).

Credit: BBC

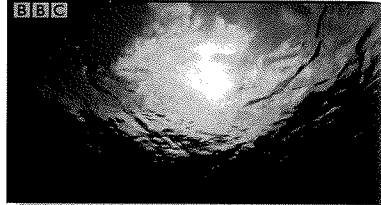


Figure 9.26  
The BBC series, *Planet Earth*, uses narration to describe the various creatures and landscapes. To what extent do you also think the narration contributes toward storytelling?  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=3-uA8t7-msY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3-uA8t7-msY)



In cases in which this activity is obvious, the narrator might indicate how the activity is happening or some other biological fact about the creature. For instance, in a scene showing two cuttlefish courting each other, the narration might explain the purpose of their complex color changes or how these changes occur biologically.

For fiction, voice-over narration should not be a device that suddenly appears in a film but a particular style that permeates the film as a whole (Figure 9.27). Narration shouldn't happen once, but occur regularly throughout the movie, as in *Fight Club*, in which the main, nameless character, played by Edward Norton, continually narrates events and his thoughts to the audience.

Bad examples of narration occur when directors use it to fill in plot holes due to a poorly written script. While this is true of fictional narratives, it also can be

Credit: Everett Collection



Figure 9.27  
The opening scene from *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford* uses voice-over narration to provide information about the main character.  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=r2gY\\_e1ZKD8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r2gY_e1ZKD8)



true of nonfiction, expository scripts as well. Make sure your original script for any kind of video is complete and provides a thorough blueprint that expresses your point, even if narration is removed.

Just as you should read other scripts to better write your own scripts, and read other dialogue to better write your own dialogue, you should read and listen to other examples of voice-over narration to help you better write narration. Listen to many different kinds of narration and to specific instances that align with your particular goals. If you're creating an advertisement, seek out these examples. If you're producing your own nature documentary, turn on the Discovery Channel and pay attention to how the narration on its programs is crafted. Learn from the examples of others.

Also, just as with dialogue, user-test your narration. Let others read your narration, as well as listen to you speak it aloud. You also can ask others to read it aloud, so you can hear it yourself. If you're casting someone else to narrate, let the person read over it a few times, and, if possible, adjust the language or sentence structure to better suit the person's speaking style. You might also include cues for how you want certain lines or words to be delivered, such as cues for emphasis, volume, or tone.

Edit the script to make sure the narration is consistent for speech style, including tone of voice, use of first, second, or third person, and the use of contractions. Make sure the narration at the beginning of the script has the same style as the narration at the end of the script.

Finally, pay attention to your transitions, so each sentence logically flows into the next and the narration makes sense with what occurs onscreen. You don't want the narration to detract from the visual elements, only to reinforce or add to them. When you feel the written narration is polished, record it and listen to it through your sound editor, so you can hear how it will sound when outputted through speakers, experiencing it the way your audience will.

Link

## Building

Find documentary footage that is re-narrated and placed on YouTube, such as the “Honey Badger” clip in Figure 9.28. Discuss the role tone has when adding narration to an image. How is this similar to anchorage (Chapter 8)? How would the same words, delivered differently, produce another interpretation of the clip? How would the voice of a particular actor influence how you receive the video? How does the narration add rhetorical appeals to the video, such as *logos*, *pathos*, *ethos*, or *kairos*? Take the raw footage from one of these clips, and write and record your own narration. Share your remixed video with the class, as well as the original, and discuss how narration plays a role in audience reception.



Figure 9.28  
That honey badger is nasty!  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=4r7wHMg5Yjg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4r7wHMg5Yjg)



Search

## Engine

Many commercials use voice-over narration delivered by famous celebrities, yet often these celebrities aren't given name credit. For example, Gene Hackman provides the narration for Lowe's commercials (the hardware store), while Jeff Bridges narrates many commercials for the car company, Hyundai. Although many viewers might recognize the voice, most probably cannot identify the name the voice belongs to. Why do you think companies would hire such celebrities for their voice alone, rather than use less expensive voice talent? What do they gain? What rhetorical appeals are used by doing so? Develop a claim based on your research, and support it with reasons and evidence.

## Storyboards

Often, before shooting a film directly from the script, directors will create storyboards to provide a visual representation of the shots they hope to produce. Storyboards help make shooting go more smoothly, as they provide an intermediary translation of what a particular shot should look like before spending

time and money on set with equipment and actors. A storyboard also can give the entire production staff a clearer idea about the overall process and final vision. Storyboarding can be a time-consuming process, but it is extremely important toward getting the final look you're after. Consider the clip in Figure 9.29 of Steven Spielberg discussing his storyboard process.

If you're creating a storyboard for a visual production, such as video, start with your script. Although it provides general instructions for how to create the movie, it leaves a lot of room for the director and actors to insert their own creative ideas. The storyboard will help fill in these details and provide visual life to the words in the screenplay. Read through it, and try to break down each scene into individual shots (a shot consists of a segment of footage with no cuts), with each storyboard panel representing one shot. After reading through the script, you should have developed a shot list from which you can create the storyboard (as well as shoot the actual footage).

Credit: AFI



Figure 9.29  
Steven Spielberg on storyboarding  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=nBH89Y0Xj7c](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nBH89Y0Xj7c)



As you read the script and evaluate each shot, consider including information about each of the following aspects of your video when creating your final list and the corresponding storyboard panels:

- location for each shot
- number of actors in the shot
- important props or set pieces
- important camera directions for the shot (aerial, close up, zoom in)
- movement of characters or objects
- movement of camera (is it fixed or does it move with the action?)
- lighting needs
- special effects

Although you'll have a more complete idea of your film if you storyboard every shot, this isn't always necessary. Sometimes you only need to consider the most important sequences or the general unfolding of a scene. Often, a basic sketch will give you enough clarity that you can set up the equipment, help the actors perform their roles, and start shooting. You also can improvise and go

off-storyboard if you or other collaborative members have ideas on location. While you typically don't want to improvise the entire project, be flexible with your script and storyboard, and revise when inspiration strikes. This can be especially important if uncontrollable elements interfere with your previous plans, such as changing weather conditions, other natural phenomena, or the general unforeseen occurrence.

## Rhetorical Continuities

Storyboards aren't restricted to video. They can be useful when designing websites in order to lay out the site's design and flow from the home page to other pages. You also can use them for podcasts, helping you lay out when to include your own narration, when to include preexisting clips, or as a way to add voice-over directions or other notes. If you were writing a printed output, such as a novel, you also could use a storyboard to help you organize the plotline or figure out where to add subplots, character introductions, or other important elements to the story. Storyboards allow you to further rearrange all the pieces to easily experiment and see if other sequences might produce better results.

Several techniques can be used to create your own storyboard, and, like all writing activities, you'll discover the strategies that work best for you. When you think of storyboarding, you might think of hundreds of hand-drawn images posted onto a wall to lay out an entire sequence (Figure 9.30). While this is certainly one method, several software applications can help make the task easier and more transportable.

Graphic design programs, such as Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator, or Gimp, can be used to digitally sketch the scenes and save them in a variety of image formats. If you decide to hand-draw your scenes, you might scan the sketches to send them to collaborators and insert them into programs such as Microsoft PowerPoint or Prezi to more easily arrange their order (Figure 9.31). In either case, consider using the slug lines from

Credit: wiredfly.blogspot.com



Figure 9.30  
Storyboards can easily take up a whole wall.

wiredfly.blogspot.com/2010\_04\_01\_archive.html



Link

## Building

Revisit the earlier prompt that asked you to create a short screenplay based on a short story, comic, or other story not already in movie form. Create a shot list and storyboard for your screenplay. In addition to images, consider including other direction and dialogue to help orient the viewer. Finally, place your storyboard in a digital format, such as Prezi, and share it with the class.

the script as the titles for each card so you clearly understand where and when each scene occurs.

Credit: Prezi by Jasmine Creed

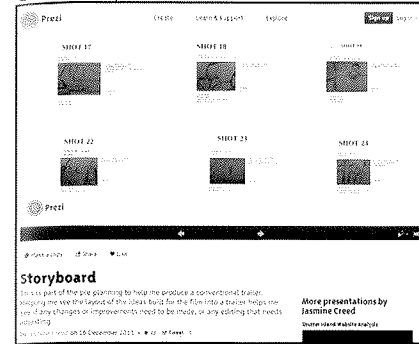


Figure 9.31  
A Prezi can be a useful tool for creating storyboards.

prezi.com/iidlkhrsg8l/storyboard/



might help you catch any images that are logically out of order.

If, like Spielberg, you're not good at drawing, you could find preexisting images that represent what you're trying to convey in the final shot, or take photographs that mimic the description in the screenplay. As a worst-case scenario, you also could write textual descriptions of each scene that are more complete than the details in the script. Regardless, a storyboard is important and should be drafted before shooting begins. Together with the instructions of the script, the storyboard can offer the best blueprint that assures you create a well-designed, quality production.

Once you have your rough sequence completed, you can use the storyboard as a checklist, making sure you capture each shot. A storyboard also makes it easier to shoot out of sequence and still ensure you capture all of the shots you need, as well as make sure you put them in the correct, final order. Finally, consider including any dialogue in the scene next to the appropriate images. This technique can help you better understand how the images flow together and

## Engine

Search

Create a storyboard for a traditional essay you wrote for another class. How would you convey the information from this essay in images? How would you break up the essay into individual shots? How would you incorporate the rhetorical appeals of *logo*, *ethos*, *pathos*, and *kairos*? Once you've finished, share both the storyboard and original essay with a peer or the class and get their feedback.

## Supporting documents

In addition to screenplays, dialogue, narration, storyboards, and captions, a variety of other kinds of writing can help you plan, draft, and organize your project, so it comes together as you envision it. Not all of these written documents will be necessary for every project, so use them at your discretion, according to what helps you stay on track and complete the assignment.

### Logline

A logline is a brief synopsis of a work, typically a film, that is usually twenty-five to fifty words or less. While the logline can tell an audience what a movie is about, it's also very useful for an author at the beginning of the writing process to keep her focused on the final goal of the film. In this way, the logline can be thought of as the main thesis statement of the film, helping the writer keep track of the story she wants to tell. For example, a logline for a movie about King Tut might state:

*As a boy ruler of Ancient Egypt, King Tutankhamen had to contend with conspiring advisors and jealous generals, one of which would take his life.*

This logline focuses the story on the mystery of how King Tut died, making it a historical mystery film. One could redirect the intention of the film, and its thesis, toward a romance by restating the logline as:

*Despite falling deeply in love with a local slave girl, King Tut is advised to marry his half-sister, Ankhesenamun, for political reasons. He must decide between love and duty.*

### Treatments

Before writing a full script, screenwriters or film producers will often write a film treatment that provides a comprehensive outline for the movie. A treatment

is usually between thirty and sixty pages, and includes full descriptions for each scene. If a film script is not solicited by a studio, screenwriters often will write and distribute a presentation treatment to pique interest from potential collaborators rather than taking the time to draft a full screenplay. If you have an idea for a video production, a treatment can help you organize and provide detail for each scene before fleshing out camera directions and full dialogue.

### Descriptions

One of the more common kinds of writing you'll probably compose includes descriptions. In order to work collaboratively, or even to provide reminders to yourself, you should write descriptions of characters, places, events, plotlines, scenery, props, special effects, music, or any other element that might be incorporated into your production (Figure 9.32). Since it's typically cheaper to write these descriptions before trying to film them, they can save you time and money, and give others a sense of the visual aesthetic you're trying to achieve.

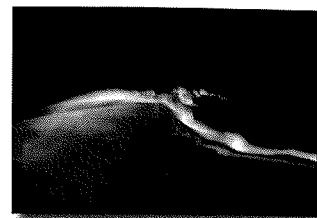


Figure 9.32  
How would you describe your idea for a special effect to someone else?

When writing descriptions, try to use active verbs and precise language when possible. You want the reader to have a very clear understanding of your vision, so include concrete language with sensory details such as colors, textures, sounds, as well as comparisons with things the reader might already be familiar with. Finally, besides physical details, also describe the mood that a character, setting, or scene evokes.

### Lists

Although you've probably created many lists, it's important to remember this valuable writing genre. Lists can help organize complex information into either step-by-step guides, or simply provide a reminder of things to do. When composing digital writing projects, you should maintain many lists, including lists of:

- characters
- settings
- shots
- images
- sounds



- props
- permissions

As you can see, sometimes you need to create a list of lists to write. Determining these lists before you start composing—as well as keeping track of fine points such as permissions during the process—will help you be more efficient and ensure you attend to all of the details.

### Summaries

When working collaboratively, often you'll need to write information or task lists to other members of your team, describing what they need to know or what to accomplish. When describing parts of the product, you might need to compose summaries for these collaborators who may not need all the information you have, making the information more digestible and more quickly accessible.

In addition, not all audiences need access to the same level of detail. While the actors might only need a general summary of the shooting locations, the set designer will need to know much more, including not only the details of the physical environment but also its history or other important information to make sure all of the elements such as trees, furniture, vehicles, animals, props, costumes, or other elements belong in the location and aren't out of place.

### Rhetorical Continuities

When conducting research for your project—whether video-based or not—you'll need to condense that research into basic, usable material for yourself as well. Summarizing will enable you to quickly recall information to mind and help you work more efficiently. Writing summaries of your research also will help you better master the material of your project.

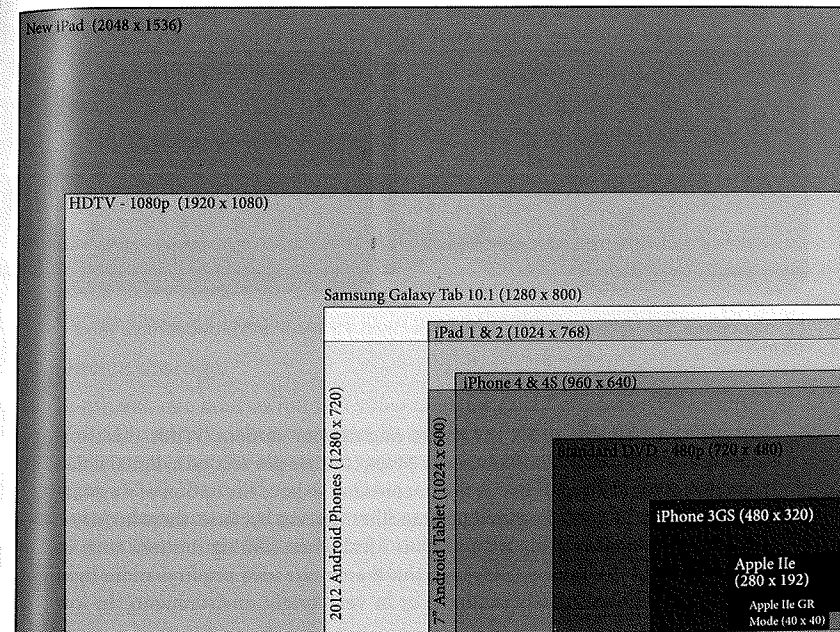
When you compose summaries, you have to decide what to leave in, and what to leave out. When beginning your research, first make sure you understand the content of what you're reading. Then, edit the original piece by highlighting the key points and crossing out what you feel is superfluous information. You can always go back to the master document if you need to find these details. Rather than copying sentences from the original piece word-for-word, try to rewrite the information in your own words. You can further edit your own subsequent writings in the same way before distributing them to others.

## Digital Video Technologies

Once you've understood the rhetorical aspects of writing with video, and writing for video, you should also understand a few technologies and technical details about digital video to help you produce digital video. Although it's beyond the scope of this book to provide instructions on every video camcorder or every video editing program, there are some basic technical choices you should consider when creating a new digital video.

### Screen settings

There are a few initial settings you might want to decide upon before you begin shooting video, and some other considerations once you've finished. While you might not always be able to select some of these settings because of the particular limitations of your device, keep them in mind if they're available in your camera's settings or editing program. When creating a video, you have three important choices to make regarding screen settings: the screen dimensions, the aspect ratio, and the frame rate.



## Screen dimensions

Since your digital videos will probably be viewed on a digital device such as a computer monitor, smartphone, or tablet, you should consider the most common screen dimensions for each of these displays (Figure 9.33). Ideally, your video will be easily viewable on any size screen. However, research which size screen you expect your audience to use most of the time and optimize your audience's viewing by using this screen dimension.

## Aspect ratio

Many camera settings also provide you with the option of setting the aspect ratio. You typically have two choices, 4:3 and 16:9. This ratio refers to the ratio of horizontal units (width) to vertical units (height) (Figure 9.34). The 4:3 ratio provides a narrower field of view and is common on older monitors and televisions before the ratio of 16:9—often referred to as “widescreen”—became popular. Given that most digital video appears on widescreen monitors with a 16:9 ratio, consider using this aspect ratio. In addition, 16:9 delivers more visual information to the viewer since it provides a wider field of view.



Figure 9.34  
As you can see, the 16:9 aspect ratio (left) is wider than 4:3 (right) and provides more visual information.

## Frame rate

You also may be able to set the frame rate of your camera. While theatrical films have traditionally shot footage at 24 fps (frames per second), digital video usually records at 30 fps, but it is not uncommon to have the option of shooting at 60 fps. Generally, 60 fps provides smoother motion because there are more images per second, so this frame rate is ideal when filming motion, such as sports or moving subjects. However, this frame rate also requires more light and should be used mostly outdoors or in very bright environments. In low

light situations, or situations in which the subjects are not moving quickly, 30 fps is your best bet. In addition, since most online video is 30 fps, if you plan on integrating your own digital video footage with clips taken from online sources such as YouTube, you should probably choose 30 fps so the frame rates will all be the same.

## Building

Browse various websites that use video, and determine whether the sites post videos in 4:3 or 16:9 aspect ratios. How many do you find of each? Is one more predominant than the other? Why do you think this is so? What advantages do you think the website authors considered when choosing an aspect ratio for their particular sites? Develop a claim based on your research, and support it with reasons and evidence.

## Engine

Research the different frame rates used when shooting film and video. What was the original frame rate that was widely adopted? Why was this frame rate chosen? Why did other frame rates develop? What are the best uses for each frame rate? Develop a claim based on your research, and support it with reasons and evidence.

## Storing video

When considering where to store videos, you have three main domains to consider: storage on the device itself, saving and formatting the video for other devices, and uploading video to online sites. Generally, you select storage media based on two characteristics: capacity and data transfer speed. You need storage media with enough capacity to record the video.

## Device storage

In general, one hour of full HD video takes up 11–12 gigabytes (GB); thus, a 4GB SD card will only store about 20 minutes of video. The data transfer rate of the storage media affects the quality of the video. For SD cards, consider using a Class 10 card, if possible. Once recorded, transfer your video to another storage device on the platform you'll use for editing. Your editing will usually go smoother if these files are stored locally on your computer, and you can then delete the files from your camera's storage so you can shoot more content.

## Saving and formatting

After editing, the best quality file format for saving your video is the format you recorded the video in. For instance, if your video camera records video as an MP4, then you should save your final video as an MP4. However, the best quality video also produces the biggest file size, which might make it difficult to upload and view on the Internet. Instead, you might choose to save the file in a smaller, compressed format. The video will lose some quality, but it will play better when streamed online. Also consider that saving can sometimes take a long time and usually cannot be stopped once started. Make sure you have enough time in a computer lab or at home before beginning the process.

## Uploading video

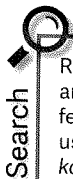
Once you have captured and edited video, you can now upload the video for distribution online or through other storage devices such as a Flash USB drive or a portable hard drive. If you're uploading the video to the Internet, consider which website provides the best audience and distribution. For instance, YouTube has a much wider audience and better search engine results, but Vimeo is sometimes considered more professional. See Chapters 6 and 11 for more information about how to choose the best video sharing websites.



Link

### Building

Make a list of all video file formats that have been developed. Choose three of these file types, and research who created the file type, when it was created, and for what purpose. What problem did these file formats solve? Develop a claim based on your research, and support it with reasons and evidence.



Search

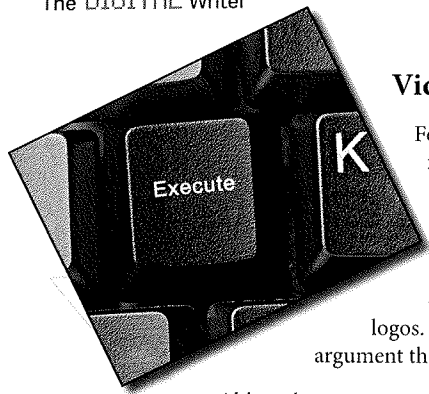
### Engine

Research the different video sharing sites that are available (YouTube and Vimeo are just two of the possibilities). Create a list, and include the features of each site, and evaluate their pros and cons. What are the best uses for each site? How might each site affect the *ethos*, *pathos*, *logos*, or *kairos* of the video? Develop a claim based on your research, and support it with reasons and evidence.

## KEY Terms

180-degree rule  
 aspect ratio  
 audio  
 caption  
 chin room  
 close-up  
 description  
 dialogue  
 Dutch angle  
 extreme close-up  
 frame rate  
 framing  
 headroom  
 high angle  
 instructions  
 list

logline  
 low angle  
 medium shot  
 montage  
 narration  
 nose room  
 rule of thirds  
 screen dimension  
 screenplay  
 script  
 sequence  
 storyboard  
 summary  
 treatment  
 wide shot



## Video Essay

For this activity, create a video essay that makes a claim and supports it with reasons and evidence. An argument can be explicit or implicit, and much of your supporting evidence may offer examples that make your point implicitly based on metaphor or analogy, appealing to pathos rather than logos. Of course, you can construct an explicit argument through video as well (Figure 9.35).

Although your instructor will provide you with more specific guidelines for your video essay, the overall project should:

- last 3–5 minutes in length
- provide a thesis or claim with reasons and evidence
- include a short research report
- include a script
- include a rough cut prior to revising, editing, and proofing
- include a one-page memo detailing what changes were made during the revision process

As you've already learned from the previous chapters, much alphabetic writing will go into this project before the video is even shot. Rather than just cobbling together a video, take serious care during the prewriting phase of this project to make sure it comes together in a clear, coherent, and professional manner. While the quality of the video and audio will depend on the available resources you have in your class or on campus, the quality of the video's content depends on the amount of time and effort you put into its research and preparation. As a general process, consider the following steps toward completing your video essay.

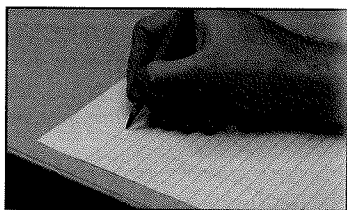


Figure 9.35  
This essay about the pencil was produced by students trying to make an explicit argument (through the persona of Nicolas Cage).



[www.youtube.com/watch?v=3BEc5CDju\\_k](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3BEc5CDju_k)

**Choose a topic:** A video essay, like a written essay or photo essay, first requires that you choose your topic—that you determine what you'd like to produce your video about. As with other kinds of writing, find a topic that interests you, one that calls you to write.

**Research your topic:** As with any writing assignment, much of the work comes before you start writing. You also should plan, as you think about your script, what kinds of footage you're capable of shooting and what video already exists for you to incorporate. As with the photo essay, unless your class has a large travel budget, you probably won't be able to take your own video of remote locations. In addition, make sure you are safe when taking your own video, and ask for permission when shooting on private property or other locations that require it.

**Plan and draft:** Before picking up the camera, plan your initial components and the structure of your argument. This plan can include writing an essay first—making sure you have a claim, reasons, and evidence—or it can offer a more basic outline of the argument and the major scenes and visuals you hope to include. Once you clarify the main points for yourself, you can start to think more visually, developing a script that will depict the scenes you hope to show as well as any audio you might use, including any voice-over narration. This step can be the most important and may determine if your project fails or succeeds.

**Create a storyboard:** Once you've completed a script, create a storyboard that depicts each shot. The storyboard will be invaluable as both a conceptual tool—helping you to see your video before you actually assemble and edit it—as well as an organizational tool, providing a framework for visually arranging your script and making sure you account for all the shots you might need.

**Create a shot list and gather footage:** Once you have a script, you can create a shot list. This list will provide an important resource to ensure that you gather all of the video footage you'll need. On the list, note which footage you plan to shoot yourself and which footage you plan to use from archival sources. Dividing your list this way can help you manage your time since the footage you shoot yourself will probably take longer to gather than archival footage. When producing video, try to gather this footage as early as possible, as editing will be more time consuming than you may realize and is often the longest part of the process.

**Add narration:** Although your project may not require it, you may want to add voice-over narration to your video to comment on the footage or to maintain the argumentative arc. Include this narration in your script and record all narration before starting the revision process.